

## INFORMATION PAPER

ATZP-EP

March 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR: Distribution

SUBJECT: Mountain Lions

1. Purpose: To provide information on mountain lions at former Fort Ord.

2. Facts:

a. Background: The undeveloped areas of former Fort Ord are frequented by mountain lions. Recent sightings of mountain lions in these undeveloped areas remind us of the need to be aware of the potential for mountain lion encounters. Humans and mountain lions can continue to coexist at former Fort Ord by understanding mountain lion behavior and ways to reduce encounters.

b. Identification and Behavior: Adult mountain lions are 5 - 8 feet in length (from nose to tail tip) and weigh 75 - 250 pounds. Females are smaller than males. Cubs are spotted and have a dark ring around their tails. When identifying a mountain lion, size and the presence of a long tail are the most reliable characteristics. Bobcats are often mistaken for mountain lions. However, bobcat are smaller (3 - 4 feet in length), spotted, and have short tails. Mountain lions usually hunt alone in the evening. Deer are the most common prey, although small animals are also hunted. Prey is usually attacked from behind and killed with a bite to the neck. Mountain lions can roam over areas up to 100 square miles; however, they are secretive animals and human encounters are rare. The potential for being killed or injured by a mountain lion is extremely low.

b. Measures to avoid encounters: If you live near undeveloped areas, inviting wildlife into your yard may attract mountain lions. Do not feed wild animals and deer proof your landscape. Keep outdoor spaces well lit and remove or trim low vegetation to maintain visibility. Keep pets secure, especially at night. Make sure children are supervised while outdoors and understand what to do in the event of an encounter. When in undeveloped areas, do not travel alone, especially late afternoon through dusk.

c. Measures to take if you encounter a mountain lion: If you encounter a mountain lion do not approach it, give it room to escape. In most cases the mountain lion will run away. It is important to convince the mountain lion that you are not prey. Do not run, turn your back or crouch down. Try to pick up children without crouching down. Make eye contact and try to make yourself look as big as possible. In the unlikely event that you are attacked, fight back with anything at hand. If you encounter a mountain lion please contact the Directorate of Environmental and Natural Resources at 242-7920.